

## Case-Based Learning

**Description** A case describes typical issues or problems. It gives students the opportunity to place themselves in the position of the decision maker in a specific simulated situation. The scenarios are usually taken from real life and presented from the standpoint of the decision maker. A successful case is one which offers debate on alternative courses of action, rather than offering a single settled outcome or solution.

**Example** A case scenario is presented to the whole class and some questions are provided for discussion.

-- Case Scenario --

E-commerce gives corporate gift company welcome boost

*This case study describes how an advertising gift distributor is boosting sales through use of e-commerce.*

Based in Windsor, Healey Williams is an advertising gift distributor. The company supplies a wide range of business and promotional gifts to corporate clients within the UK, but also reaches a worldwide audience through the internet.

Founded in 1987, Healey Williams started life in a small room with two partners, a desk, phone and typewriter. Today, it employs 10 people and is one of the first companies in the UK to offer a fully integrated online ordering service for business gifts. Their customers are mostly blue chip companies, especially within the IT and financial sectors.

Founding partner, Nigel Williams, explains: 'We believed that e-commerce would provide us with a competitive edge in an industry that has a reputation for being lethargic in adopting new technology. We also hoped that it could bring genuine benefits and additional services to our customers, something that has proved to be true. We experienced a rise in sales in excess of £200,000 as a direct result of our ability to offer online catalogues for new and existing customers.'

Through the use of e-commerce the business was able to introduce its own online catalogues for its range of business and promotional gifts. They have taken this ...

(source: [http://bcs.businesseurope.com/cmn/viewdoc.jsp?cat=ec&ct=cs&docid=BEL1\\_Casestudy\\_0000003655](http://bcs.businesseurope.com/cmn/viewdoc.jsp?cat=ec&ct=cs&docid=BEL1_Casestudy_0000003655))

Questions for Discussion:

- Ask students to make an analysis on the present case scenario, e.g., What is the strategic goal this company is trying to achieve? Analyse how this company tried to achieve this goal.
- Ask students to design a new model based on the information in the case material, their creativity and their prior knowledge in relevant areas, e.g., If you're the Marketing Manager, what methods including online solutions would you use to expand your company's business plan?
- Ask students to evaluate each others' models and give comments.

**How Active?** Cases provoke action plans. In the example, students place themselves in the position of the Marketing Manager and seek solutions to expand the company's business plan. This method also offers debates amongst the

students on alternative courses of action, and that demands high order thinking in evaluation, analysis, decision making and reasoning, etc. This method is therefore ideal for group work.

***How Related to Real Life?***

Case scenarios introduce into the classroom a simulated professional context in which students make hypotheses and negotiate for appropriate actions. For example, the context of 'e-commerce' is provided for students to discuss about strategic marketing and other related economic issues.

***What Learning Outcomes?***

Since the case scenarios are authentic, open-ended and the questions provide a large space for investigation, students are encouraged to critically analyse and interpret the issues raised in the case and later apply prior knowledge into the situation in order to formulate and solve the key problems. When analysing the issues, students bring in and reflect on their own experience. In other words, this method is effective in generating high levels of reasoning, involvement and group participation.